
Google LifeTrips

CityProfile: Bangkok



Bangkok is the 22nd most populous city in the world with a registered population of around 7 million. However some estimate that the population may in fact be as high as 15 million. The city is growing very fast. This is fueled by people moving into the city from abroad and from country areas.

Bangkok lies on the Chao Phraya River and most of the city is around 2m (6.5ft) above sea level.

This makes areas along the river prone to

flooding. In some areas flood walls have been built to keep areas dry when heavy rains raise the level of the river and canals. The city is gradually sinking and some estimate that the city will be under 50cm of water by 2025.

Bangkok has 50 different *khet* (districts). The growth of Bangkok, by the influx of western countries as well as Laos, Burma, Cambodia as well as internal immigrants moving to the city have led to the rapid expansion. The population increase has forced the inner city to build vertically and many tall buildings are now being constructed throughout the capital.



Bangkok has large green areas and whilst there has been some pressure to give these up for building, more recently planning law has been able to protect these green spaces.

Bangkok has the largest number of European residents outside of Singapore. There is also a large number of illegal immigrants in the city. 92% of the population is Buddhist.

Transport in the city is managed by road, rail and canals. Despite a massive building programme the congestion in Bangkok has not abated. Many residents spend many many hours commuting every day. The city has built double decker roadways on many main roadways, but it is still common for traffic jams to move less than a kilometre per hour at some times and in some areas.

In 1999 an elevated train (BTS Skytrain) was constructed but parts of the railway network have not been completed. An MRT subway system opened in 2004 which connects key parts of the city. Problems at a government level have stopped many programmes from being completed.

There is also a comprehensive bus service in operation in Bangkok.

Tourism is a very important industry in Bangkok and some regard it as the top tourist destination in the world. Many people living and working in Bangkok both in the formal and informal sectors of employment work to support tourists.

In addition to general tourist infrastructure, shopping is very popular in Bangkok, whether it be in formal shops or informally in markets. Once again many people in Bangkok work in this sector.

Bangkok too has a vibrant nightlife and many people work in restaurant, bar and related industries.

Employment: Informal Sector

Many people in Bangkok work in the informal sector of the economy. This means that they do not work for big companies, they buy and sell things locally or provide services in local areas. The percentage of people working in the informal sector in Bangkok is very high with some 87% of slum dwellers working in this kind of work.

For people newly relocated to Bangkok the informal sector offers opportunities for making a small amount of money quickly.



This kind of work includes:

Tuk-tuk drivers (local motorbike taxis as in photograph above)

Market sellers

Shoe cleaners

Wandering fruit sellers

Wandering food sellers

Wandering jewellery sellers

Market based massage providers

Tourist guides

Street based watch sellers

Street performers

Street based magazine sellers

Employment: Formal Sector

Although there is a large informal sector in Bangkok, as the city is prosperous and growing, there is also a growing formal sector of employment. Industries in Bangkok include the following:

tourism

textiles and garment manufacture

manufacturing such as jewellery and electric appliances, computers and parts, integrated circuits, furniture, plastics, automobiles and automotive parts

Zones of the city

Bangkok has some distinctive areas:

Ratchadaphisek	Recently turned into a business area
Sukhumvit	Recently turned into a mixed commercial and residential areas
Wireless Rd and Chitlom	Expensive residential and embassy area
Phra Nakon and Dusit	Governmental agency area (no skyscraper zone) and tourist area with managed heritage buildings
Victory Monument	Transport Hub
Northern and Western zones	These areas are mainly middle class residential areas
Lad Prao and Dri Nakarin	Residential compounds and townhouses
Northern and Eastern reaches	Areas of expanding residential sprawl
Western reaches	Newer area of expanding residential sprawl
Suvarnabhumi Airport	Eastern zone promoting further residential growth
Ratchaprasong	Central shopping precinct
Port of Bangkok	Poorest areas are scattered around the city with the most poor area being north of the Port of Bangkok.
Khlong Toei	Industrial area with low socio-economic status residents